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ABSTRACT

Early childhood teacher certification became an issue in Kentucky in 1986 with the passage of a federal law giving responsibility for services for children under kindergarten age to public school districts. This article deals with: (1) the development of interdisciplinary early childhood education teacher certification requirements in the state of Kentucky; (2) the process for obtaining certification in the state; and (3) a comparison of Kentucky's interdisciplinary standards to proposed national standards. The article begins with a description of the regulative history leading to adoption of licensure for early childhood educators. It next describes the process for obtaining an Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) Teacher Certification, including state-regulated program standards, methods of assessment (including suggested portfolio contents), and written testing requirements. The article concludes with comparison of Kentucky's standards to proposed national standards, asserting that the national standards' strong emphasis on classroom teaching and academic disciplines in early elementary teacher training results in inadequate training for educators who serve younger children. Appendices present IECE Teacher Standards, topics covered in testing, and standards drafted by the National Board for Advanced Certification of Early Childhood/Generalist Teachers. (EV)

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INTERDISCIPLINARY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHER CERTIFICATION

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This review deals with (a) the *development* of interdisciplinary early childhood education teacher certification requirements in the state of Kentucky, USA; (b) the *process* for obtaining early childhood teacher certification in Kentucky; and (c) a *comparison* of Kentucky's interdisciplinary early childhood teacher certification standards to proposed USA national advanced early childhood generalist teacher standards .

Development

Early childhood teacher certification became an issue in Kentucky in 1986. At that time federal law (Public Law 99-457) regarding the education of children with disabilities gave responsibility for services to children younger than kindergarten age to public school districts. In 1990 the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA, Kentucky House Bill 940) provided for preschool education programs for four year old children in Kentucky. KERA made provision for the preschool education of children who are considered at risk for educational failure based on family income.

At the same time, KERA prohibited the replacement of existing federal programs for young children. Headstart, for example, is a federally funded early childhood program, that provides services to three and four year old children in Kentucky. State and federal programs, such as First Steps, Kentucky's early intervention system, also provide services for infants and toddlers (birth to three years of age) with disabilities.

KERA created the Education Professional Standards Board to establish requirements for obtaining and maintaining teacher certification. That Board

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decided to license education professionals in Kentucky who work with children birth to primary school through the Kentucky Department of Education Teacher Certification Office. Called the Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) Teacher Certification, that license embraces children with and without disabilities. The Kentucky Administrative Regulation (704 KAR 20:084, Section 4) states: "Persons holding this certification shall serve as primary developers and implementers of individual programs for children with and without disabilities including Individual Education Plans and Individual Family Service Plans with consultation and support from specialists (e.g., speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, nurses, and educators of the hearing impaired or vision impaired) according to the needs of the child."

The new teacher license for IECE teacher certification does not qualify holders to teach in primary school (Burruss & Fairchild, 1993). Primary school in Kentucky includes what was formerly called kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade. Primary school teacher licensure in Kentucky provides for general education teachers and special education teachers. Special Education teachers provide direct instruction to students with special needs and technical assistant to general classroom teachers. Special educators may serve as a member of a teaching team and/or may serve as a consultant.

When the new IECE licensure was proposed, concerns were voiced. Private-for-profit child care providers and private kindergarten directors feared that revenue would be lost when paying clients transferred their children to free public schools. Others were concerned that the inclusion of infants and toddlers, 0-3 years of age, would be intrusive to families and inappropriate for schools. Senior personnel in some early childhood education programs feared they would lose their jobs to young, inexperienced, but licensed job applicants. Consequently, the idea of a new teacher licensure for pre-primary personnel produced many questions and misconceptions

In the spring of 1994, a state regulation providing for the new IECE license was passed but short lived. An abbreviated version was passed February 9, 1995. The new regulation (704 KAR 20:084) created the IECE license; but in contrast to the first regulation, neither specifies who will be required to hold the license nor a timeline for requirement. Requirement by state and federal programs for at least a licensed head/lead teacher is assumed. Hopes are long standing that the existence of a license will (1) elevate the profession; (2) enhance the status of early childhood educators, caregivers, and interventionists; and (3) increase wages. Such improvements would lead to the more important goal of increased quality services to children and families. By 1992 every school district in Kentucky was required to provide early childhood education for qualifying four year old children. Kentucky law (Kentucky Revised Statute 157.226) reaffirming federal requirements (Public Law 99-457) stipulated that, at the beginning of the 1992-1993 school year, any three-five year old child with a disability was eligible for free and appropriate education. Teaching positions in the new early childhood pro-

grams were filled by persons holding teacher certification in other fields, and by persons holding bachelor degrees in fields related to early childhood education (e.g., child development and speech therapy).

Process

In the spring of 1995, twelve hundred persons expressed a desire for the new early childhood teacher license by applying for participation in a testing exercise. The following is a description of the process for obtaining the IECE teacher license.

The applicant for the Professional Certificate for Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education, Birth to Primary, (for certification standards, see *Appendix A*) will complete a bachelor's degree - and the approved program of preparation for this license - at a teacher education institution recognized by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board. In addition, the applicant is required to complete written tests and a one-year internship (704 KAR 20:084, Section 2).

Approved Program Standards

The state regulation sets forth four standards for an approved program of preparation.

1. The program shall be designed to prepare candidates to teach and manage tasks identified in the IECE Teacher Standards.
2. The programs shall include a system of continuous assessment to evaluate the candidate's progress and level of attainment on the teacher standards. The assessment shall include performance on authentic teaching and managing tasks in settings that are inclusive of children across abilities and contexts.
3. The program shall ensure the recruitment and retention of candidates from culturally diverse backgrounds.
4. The program shall provide knowledge and experiences with children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Approved Program - Continuous Assessment

The continuous assessment required in an approved teacher preparation program calls for traditional paper and pencil testing, evaluation of products, and performance tasks. The products are to be organized into a portfolio (KDE, 1995a). The purpose of the products portfolio is to document the candidate's basic skills in educating young children. Items included in the portfolio must be the candidate's original work, must respect the confidentiality of children and their families, must reflect standard English written communication, and must be of a size that promotes readability and portability. Items should be included on the basis of quality, not quantity. Task entries must address cumulatively all interdisciplinary early childhood teacher standards (*Appendix A*), all age groups covered in the standards (infant/toddlers, preschoolers, kindergartners), all key learning contexts or settings (classroom/large group, individual/small group, parent-child dyads) and all key diversity factors (cultural difference, mild and moderate disabilities, and severe disabilities).

In addition to the task entries, standard sections of the portfolio might include:

1. *Candidate Information* - such as name, social security number, address, baccalaureate degree information (date, institution, program), test dates and scores;
2. *Table of Contents*;
3. *Statement of Completion* - documented verification by the candidate and a supervisor that the portfolio is original work; and
4. *Letter to the Reviewer* - a statement that identifies each entry by title and description, provides a rationale for entry selection, and that identifies the teacher standard or standards addressed, age group, setting and diversity factors addressed.

Suggested portfolio products are:

1. Products related to *program operation* - lesson plans, curriculum plans, daily schedules, space designs, materials inventory, program evaluation documents, evaluation documents created by supervisors.
2. Products related to *individual children* - a sample child portfolio, child observations, homevisit lesson plan, developmental history, referral for special services documentation, assessment reports, individual education plan, family service plan.
3. Products related to *collaboration* - parent communications, interdisciplinary plans, professional team plans and evaluations.

4. Products related to professional development - a personal resume, professional training documents, and philosophy statements.

Performance tasks are validated through observation documentation or video tape reviewed by peers, parents, colleagues, supervisors, program evaluators, or others. Performance tasks include activities such as direct instruction or learning facilitation, parent meetings, and professional team meetings. Other assessment activities might include an oral defense of the portfolio, teaching critic of self or others, and professional presentations.

Testing

The written testing requirements after the completion of an approved teacher preparation program include the Core Battery test of the National Teachers Examination and a test of knowledge, developed for use in Kentucky, and specific to interdisciplinary early childhood education. The Core Battery has three parts: Communication Skills, General Knowledge, and Professional Education Knowledge. Minimum passing scores are identified for each part.

The Kentucky Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Specialty Exam tests knowledge in five areas (KDE, 1995b; see *Appendix B*). The test format is multiple-choice questions. Thirty percent of the questions are related to typical child development, thirty percent to atypical child development, twenty percent to professional knowledge supporting child learning and development, ten percent to social foundations of interdisciplinary early childhood education, and ten percent to historical/legal foundations of interdisciplinary early childhood education.

Upon successful completion of a degree program, an approved program of preparation, and both series of tests, the candidates will be issued a statement of eligibility for employment. The candidate is responsible for securing employment. Upon the candidate's confirmation of employment in a position teaching children in a pre- primary program which meets specified criteria, the candidate is issued a one year license for the beginning teacher internship. Upon successful completion of the internship the Kentucky IECE Certificate (license) will be issued to the teacher.

Comparison

The concept of a national certificate offered by a board of education professionals has been considered, one that recognizes advanced knowledge skills, and dispositions in early childhood education. A draft document was prepared and sent out for evaluation. The remainder of this review compares the proposed national standards to Kentucky standards.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards drafted standards for the advanced certification of Early Childhood (ages 3-8)/Generalist teachers in 1994 (see *Appendix C*). Those standards were developed by a committee composed of outstanding teachers, scholars, and other experts in the field, all of whom had been appointed by the National Board (Woodall, et al, 1994). The advanced certification plan, if accepted by the teaching profession, would provide a nationally recognized credential for early childhood educators.

In 1994, National Board of Professional Teaching Standards asked Kentucky's Debbie Schumacher (Director, Division of Preschool Programs, Kentucky Department of Education) to analyze the drafted standards. Schumacher's response pointed out similarities between the National Boards drafted "Early Childhood/Generalist" standards and the new teacher standards contained in the Kentucky Administrative Regulation for Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Educators. She also noted differing assumptions between the state and national standards, and graphically displayed key differences.

The similarities identified by Schumacher were: (a) areas addressed are much the same although organized differently; (b) both standards emphasize child development, developmentally appropriate practice, collaboration, families, multicultural issues; and (c) Kentucky early childhood educators will have training and experience that prepare them for the pursuit of national recognition.

The differences in assumptions noted by Schumacher have to do with the identity, roles, and responsibilities of the early childhood educator. National standards assume a traditional classroom teacher for children in preschool and early elementary school, a role more consistent with primary school teachers in Kentucky (Burruss & Fairchild, 1993). In the Kentucky IECE model, the teacher's role is broader and is more consistent with that of the child development expert who serves infants and young children wherever they are. The Kentucky early childhood educator is trained to support the learning and development of infants and toddlers including those at risk of or with developmental delays. Training includes family education and parent-child models. In addition Kentucky early childhood educators function as an itinerant mentor to paraprofessionals in preschool or day care settings.

Table 1. Key Differences (according to Schumacher).

ISSUE	NATIONAL	KENTUCKY
Purpose	Voluntary standards for a small group of experienced teachers	Minimum for all new teachers as entry into the profession
Age of children	3-8 years	0-5 years (birth to primary including kindergarten where separate from primary)
Setting	Classroom	Classroom, centers, home-based, parent-child, itinerant, etc.
Types of children	Mainstream classroom with diversity	All (at risk of or with developmental delays and disabilities, special needs of all types, exceptional abilities

Conclusion

This review has focused on the evolution of Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education teacher certification in one state in the USA, the state of Kentucky. Looking back over the last decade, one becomes aware of many changes, some made in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Nonetheless, teacher educators across the state have come together with a new commitment and desire to meet the needs of children and families through the preparation of dedicated, knowledgeable, skilled early childhood teachers.

A national movement toward national certification, however, has some what different perspective regarding standards for early childhood educators. And, it is the opinion of this writer, based on the above review, that the national standards strong emphasis on classroom teaching and academic disciplines in early elementary teacher training results is inadequate training for educators who serve infants, toddlers, and preschool children. A limited comparison of these perspectives was presented above. Early Childhood Teacher Education continues to develop in the USA at both state and national levels, making for exciting times.

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IECE Teacher Standards (704 KAR 20:084, Section 9)

Teacher Standard I. The early childhood educator shall design and organize learning environments, experiences, and instruction that address the developmental needs of infants, toddlers, preschool children, and kindergarten children and Kentucky Education Reform Act goals.

These KERA goals: (a) expectations of high levels of achievement for all students; (b) development of student ability to use basic communication and mathematics skills, application of core concepts and principles from academic disciplines to situations encountered throughout life; self sufficiency; responsible group membership and community service; problems solution, and integration of knowledge and acquisition of new knowledge; (c) increased school attendance; (d) reduced student dropout and retention rates; (e) reduced physical and mental health barriers to learning; and (f) successful transition to work, post-secondary education, and the military.

The early childhood educator shall develop plans: (a) for implementation in a classroom setting; (b) for implementation in a home or other settings; (c) for implementation by teaching assistants and other staff in a variety of settings; and (d) or training teaching assistants, other staff, and parents. These plans shall include individual family service plans, individual education programs, and transition plans for children across disabilities developed in partnership with family members.

Teacher Standard II. The early childhood educator shall create appropriate learning environments for infants, toddlers, preschool children, and kindergarten children that are supportive of developmental needs of the age group and state goals. The early childhood educator shall provide developmental and learning activities in classroom and home settings, and in other settings, such as other preschools, child care programs, and hospitals. Within these settings, the learning context may include individual child activities, parent-child activities, small groups of children, and large groups of children. The early childhood educator shall create appropriate learning environments for children with diverse abilities including children with and without disabilities.

Teacher Standard III. The early childhood educator shall introduce, implement, facilitate, and manage development and learning for all age levels, all settings or contexts, and all key diversity factors.

Teacher Standard IV. The early childhood educator shall assess children's cognitive, emotional, social, communicative, adaptive, and physical development, organize assessment information; and communicate the results appropriate to the purpose of the assessment. Assessment purposes shall include: (a) determining learning results; (b) developmental screening;

(c) program planning; (d) eligibility for disability services; (e) program evaluation; (f) progress on individual education and family service plans; and (g) needs for transition to the next educational setting or program.

Teacher Standard V. The early childhood educator shall reflect on and evaluate teaching and learning situations, learning environments, and programs including learning situations and programs provided by assistants and family.

Teacher Standard VI. The early childhood educator shall collaborate and consult with staff, volunteers, families, primary caregivers, interagency and interdisciplinary teams, and local, state, and federal agencies to design, implement, and support learning programs for children.

Teacher Standard VII. The early childhood educator shall engage in self evaluation of teaching and management skills and participate in professional development to improve performance.

Teacher Standard VIII. The early childhood educator shall support and promote the self-sufficiency of families as they care for and provide safe, healthy, stimulating, and nurturing environments for young children.

Appendix B

This outline is an example of the preparation information given to test participants.

I. Typical Child Development

A. Physical Development
B. Emotional Development
C. Cognitive Development
D. Social and Play Development
E. Language/Communication Development

How do young children typically develop in these areas, prenatally through early elementary ages? What are the milestones (scope and sequence) of normal development and learning?

II. Atypical Child Development

A. Biological and Environmental Risks
B. Cognitive and Processing Problems and Disabilities
C. Physical and Health Impairments
D. Hearing Impairments
E. Visual Impairments
F. Social/Emotional Delays and Disabilities
G. Communication Delays and Disabilities

What kinds of problems occur in typical development? How do specific disabilities and other developmental problems affect learning?

III. Professional Knowledge Supporting Child Learning and Development

A. Theories of Development and Learning

What are the major theories about child development and the principles of how children learn?

B. Foundations of Assessment of Child Development

What are key principles for evaluating a child's development and interpreting delays and difficulties?

C. Principles of Curriculum and Instruction, Based on Child Development and Learning

What are the principles and educational implications for the major theories?

IV. Social Foundations and Principles of Families Affecting Child Development

What societal and family conditions affect how children develop and learn?

V. Historical/Legal Foundations of Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education

A. Special Education

What are the major principles found in federal special education requirements?

B. Early Childhood Education

What are the major federal sources and principles of early childhood programs?

C. Early Childhood special Education

What are the major sources and federal principles of programs for young children with disabilities?

D. Kentucky Law and Policy

What are the major state rules and agencies dealing with the education of young children?

Appendix C

Standards drafted by the National Board for Advanced Certification of Early Childhood/Generalist teachers

I. Understanding Young Children

Teachers use their knowledge of child development and their relationships with children and families to understand their students as individuals and to plan in response to their unique needs and potentials.

II. Promoting Child Development

Teachers organize the learning environment to promote their students' physical social, emotional, linguistic, artistic, intellectual and cognitive development.

III. Knowledge of Subject Matter

Based on their knowledge of academic subjects and how young children learn, teachers design and implement developmentally appropriate learning experiences within and across disciplines.

IV. Multiple Teaching Strategies

Teachers use a variety of methods to promote individual development, meaningful learning and group functioning.

V. Assessment

Teachers continually monitor students' work and behavior and analyze this information to improve their work with children and parents.

VI. Reflective Practice

Teachers regularly analyze, evaluate and strengthen the quality and effectiveness of their work.

VII. Family Partnerships

Teachers work with and through parents and families to support children's learning and development.

VIII. Collaboration with Colleagues

Teachers work with colleagues to improve programs and practices for young children and their families.